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Security Council

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Letter dated 28 June 2003 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to convey the attached letter, dated 28 June 2003.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**

03-41117 (E) 280603

Annex

Letter dated 28 June 2003 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

In my letter of 18 June (S/2003/659), I brought to the attention of Members of the Security Council the ceasefire agreement signed by the Liberian parties in Accra on 17 June 2003 under the stewardship of ECOWAS. I saw your prompt endorsement of a United Nations role in support of the implementation of that agreement as reflecting the Council's commitment to promote the peaceful resolution of the Liberian conflict. I believe that the time has now come for the Security Council to take action to give practical effect to that commitment, in the light of the most recent grave deterioration in the situation.

I am deeply concerned at the flagrant violations of the ceasefire that have occurred in recent days. There are reports that several hundred innocent civilians have been killed in fighting in and around Monrovia, and of wanton destruction of property and widespread looting. Approximately one third of the population of Liberia — about one million people — are seeking refuge in an already overcrowded Monrovia, where health and other humanitarian services are stretched to the limit. Virtually all international relief operations have ceased in the capital and most of the country. The combination of cholera outbreaks and food shortages in an environment of ongoing violence, disruption of life-saving services, and cessation of humanitarian aid threatens to produce a major humanitarian catastrophe. This could be on a scale possibly even greater than the recent one in Bunia in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The violations of the ceasefire shake the very foundations of the Accra peace talks. I am appealing to ECOWAS Heads of State and Government to press for the strict observance of the ceasefire agreement and to intensify the quest for a comprehensive political arrangement which would be fully consistent with the relevant provisions of the ceasefire agreement signed in Accra on 17 June 2003, including in relation to President Taylor.

The intense fighting around Monrovia in recent days has made it evident that, notwithstanding the commendable efforts of ECOWAS, broader international action is urgently needed to reverse Liberia's drift towards total disintegration. The consequences of allowing the situation to spiral out of control are too terrible to contemplate — not only for Liberia, but also for the countries of the subregion, particularly neighbouring Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire.

I therefore would like to request that the Security Council take urgent action to authorize the deployment to Liberia of a highly trained and well-equipped multinational force, under the lead of a Member State, to prevent a major humanitarian tragedy and to stabilize the situation in that country. Such a force would be authorized under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

Meanwhile, the Liberian parties should immediately and unconditionally respect the ceasefire to which they agreed in Accra, allow for the immediate resumption of international humanitarian assistance, and also resume comprehensive peace talks under the auspices of ECOWAS. At the same time, all States, including in particular Liberia's neighbours, should desist from any action that might be

construed as supporting or otherwise encouraging the continuation of the armed conflict.

I regret that this is the second such initiative that I have had to request in recent months. I am again compelled to do so by a grave humanitarian and security situation with massive potential for exacerbating regional instability. Our collective interest and our common humanity demand urgent and decisive action from the Security Council. We cannot be oblivious to the warning signs of an imminent possible catastrophe.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the Members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**